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ABSTRACT

This book confronts myths about gay and lesbian youth and explores their real experiences of coming out. The research for the book was conducted at the Horizons lesbian and gay social service agency in Chicago, Illinois. Chapter 1 takes a historical look at homosexuality and proposes a new theory of gay and lesbian development to explain a fundamental break with history that has occurred over the past two decades. Chapter 2 focuses on the transformation of the culture from homosexual to gay. Chicago provides the story of the historical construction of successive cultural forms of homosexuality and the lived experience of age cohorts of persons since the turn of the century. Major events, practices, and social rituals, such as coming out, are described as they reflect to each of these age cohorts the sacred symbols of a forbidden way of life. Chapter 3 provides a history of the Horizons agency in Chicago. Chapter 4 looks specifically at the rituals of coming out, Chapter 5 discusses milestones of sexual identity development, and Chapter 6 describes the lives of gay and lesbian youth who have come out. Chapter 7 provides a conclusion to the book, looking at gay culture and the moral career of youth. The problem of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is also addressed as it affects the lives of gay and lesbian youth. (NB)

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